



# CONSUMERS' GUIDE

JANUARY 2, 1939



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JANUARY 2, 1939

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D. E. MONTGOMERY, Consumers' Counsel

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**IF A SUGGESTION** of the Food and Drug Administration is carried out by manufacturers and heeded by users of coal tar hair dyes, these consumers will soon be establishing miniature testing laboratories behind one of their ears.

Under the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act of 1938, there is nothing to stop the sale of hair dyes containing dangerous coal tar dyes, except the provision that labels on such products must warn consumers that the dyes may be dangerous and that they should be tested before they are used; further the law requires that the labeling bear adequate directions for such preliminary testing.

So that consumers will know how to go about testing the dyes, the Food and Drug Administration has now suggested a simple test which it advises that manufacturers recommend to consumers.

With a clean brush or other applicator, the Food and Drug Administration says, apply a streak of dye not less than a quarter inch wide and a half inch long to the skin and scalp, preferably behind one ear. The dye must be placed on both the scalp and the hairless skin.

Combs, hats, spectacles, and similar objects should not be permitted to come into contact with the test area, nor

should it be covered with a dressing.

If redness, or burning, or itching or small blisters or any other type of eruption develop within 24 hours, the dye should not be used.

Under no circumstances should a hair dye be used where there is a disease or eruption present on the skin or scalp.

Tests should be made each time the hair is dyed.

Though the Food and Drug Administration recommends this test, manufacturers may, if they desire, suggest others.

**ARTIFICIAL BAIT** is all right for trout fishers, but cosmetic manufacturers may not legally dangle it before consumers. In recent stipulations approved by the Federal Trade Commission the following cosmetic companies were required to reel in their lines and try again.

A manufacturer of "almond" cream promised to stop calling it almond cream when it didn't contain sufficient ingredients obtained from almonds; to stop calling it an anti-wrinkle cream when it had no effect on wrinkles; and to stop saying that it fed the skin when it did nothing of the sort.

A New York manufacturer of eyelash creams promised to stop saying

that the cream would make eyelashes grow long and alluring or that it would make them grow at all. The same company also promised to cease saying that its "throat firming cream" firms the throat or that it would feed the skin or eliminate wrinkles.

A firm which sold its face cream as being "non-allergic" admitted that there is no such face cream and from now on it will not advertise its product this way.

**EXAGGERATED CLAIMS** for medicinal products, too, met with stern glances and prohibitions from the Federal Trade Commission in recent stipulations.

An Ohio company selling nose drops admitted that its nose drops did not give quick and sure relief from head colds and did not reduce swollen membranes. Similarly, its croup remedy, the company granted, was no more than a mild laxative and limited to the relief of paroxysms of coughing. The company will stop representing that the product will relieve spasmodic croup in any definite time.

Weeping eczema, hay fever, colds, dandruff, skin infections and irritations, and acute and chronic ulcerated conditions, are not relieved by a product sold for these purposes by a Dallas company. Prominent physicians do not use this preparation to treat certain ailments, and no clinical reports ever showed satisfactory results from its use. Despite this, the Dallas company advertised all this to be so. From now on, however, the company has promised the Federal Trade Commission it won't make these claims.

An ointment sold by a Long Beach, California, dealer does not heal sores, ulcers, and lesions, and in the future the dealer will discontinue these misrepresentations.

An electrolytic device which a New York distributor said would remove and permanently destroy superfluous hair cannot be used safely by anyone even though the advertisements said that it could. Proper skill and care are needed to operate the apparatus safely, and from now on the company agrees to warn consumers of this fact.



# CONSUMERS' CALENDAR

*Events in 1938 that made history for consumers*



## INFORMATION

### March

Utah Consumer Problems Manual, a comprehensive guide to consumer problems and local, State, and national consumer protection, is issued by the Utah WPA Workers' Education Section, in cooperation with Utah consumer organizations.

### April

April 18.—First issue of *Coal Consumers' Digest* is published by the Consumers' Counsel of the National Bituminous Coal Commission; a news bulletin for consumers of coal carrying information on the operation of the Bituminous Coal Act from the consumer angle.

April 25.—Vol. 1, No. 1 of clip sheet, *Consumer Notes*, of Consumers' Counsel Division, AAA, appears.

### June

June 3.—National Conference on Weights and Measures hears preliminary results of a national survey of weights and measures enforcement made by Consumers' Counsel Division, AAA.

June 6.—Inquiry into the agricultural implement and machinery industry, submitted to Congress by the Federal Trade Commission, indicates "serious monopolistic conditions in the industry."

### July

July 1.—WPA creates for 8 months the Consumer Standards Project, under Consumers' Counsel of AAA, carrying forward work of the former Consumers' Project of Department of Labor, terminated June 30.

### August

Report on Consumer Incomes in the United States issued by National Resources Committee. Based on the Study of Consumer Purchases, this report gives Americans the most complete picture they have ever had of how the national income is divided among 130 million consumers.

### October

October 10.—First issue of *Co-op Coal News*, published intermittently by the Consumers' Counsel of the National Bituminous Coal Commission for co-operatives buying and distributing coal, makes its bow.

### November

A 2-reel sound motion picture, "Know Your Coal," produced by Con-

sumers' Counsel of the National Bituminous Coal Commission, is made available for public showings.

November 1.—A Post Office ruling allows books to be mailed at the same rates as magazines and newspapers, instead of at parcel-post rates.

November 5.—New York City Weights and Measures Bureau inaugurates "Let the Buyer Beware" series over municipal radio station, said to be the first weights and measures education program on the air.

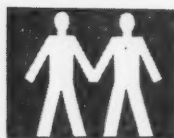
### December

Bureau of Labor Statistics issues Bulletin 659, containing statistics and discussion of retail and wholesale cooperatives. Based on a 1936 Nation-wide survey, this is the most nearly complete enumeration ever made of American consumer co-ops.



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## COOPERATION

*January*

Cooperative buying by farmers during the 1937-38 year increased to 400 million dollars, 23 percent over the previous year's total, Farm Credit Administration reports. Cooperative marketing volume rose by 10 percent over 1936-37. Membership in marketing and purchasing associations was 3,400,000 (with many farmers, however, members of more than one association).

*February*

Eighteen colleges give courses in the cooperative movement, Cooperative League survey finds, with 131 others taking up cooperatives in the general courses in marketing, economics, and sociology.

Committee on the Church and Cooperatives of the Federated Council of Churches sponsors 4 regional sight-seeing seminars on consumers' cooperation.

February 14-20.—"Wisconsin Cooperative Week" is proclaimed by Governor La Follette "to take inventory of the important part that cooperation is playing in the economic and social welfare of our people and to emphasize the possibilities of service through cooperative action."

*June*

Consumer-Farmer Milk Cooperative begins operation in New York City.

Association of Medical Cooperatives is formed.

June 18.—Consumer Wholesale Clothiers, Inc., is set up by some 20 cooperative wholesales, to market men's and women's garments cooperatively manufactured at Jersey Homesteads, Hightstown, N. J.

June 26.—National Education Association report endorses the teaching of cooperation in the schools.

June 29.—American Cooperatives, Inc., is formed to market farm equipment assembled at Arthurdale, W. Va., cooperative community.

*July*

July 27.—Federal District Court for the District of Columbia upholds legality of Group Health Association, cooperative association for the provision of medical care for Government employees in Washington.

*August*

"Door-to-door survey" by Farm Credit Administration shows that farmers market and purchase through 15,500 cooperative associations and mutual companies in United States. About 2,600 are primarily purchasing co-ops. Over a million farmers buy farm supplies, household needs, groceries, and gas and oil cooperatively.

*September*

September 21.—Greenbelt, Farm Security Administration-sponsored Maryland community, opens first cooperative movie house in the United States.

September 27.—Managers and buyers of 4 regional co-op wholesales serving 560 retail cooperatives take action looking toward uniform labeling and A, B, C Government grades for canned fruits and vegetables.

*October*

American Federation of Labor at annual convention endorses consumers' cooperatives as organizations which, when efficiently operated, "may perform an essential service for union members by protecting them from price exploitation and helping them to secure quality goods at reasonable prices."

October 12-14.—The Cooperative League of the U. S. A. holds its biennial convention at North Kansas City, Mo.

October 24-29.—"Cooperative Week" is proclaimed in Minnesota by Governor Benson, so that citizens may "become better acquainted with the principles, purposes, and practices of the cooperative movement."

*November*

Congress of Industrial Organizations at first delegate convention calls for the development of consumer cooperatives as "an effective weapon directly

available to wage-earners to control the prices of the things they buy."

November 11.—Cooperative League of the United States votes to set up joint executive offices in Chicago with National Cooperatives, Inc., cooperative wholesale, to increase coordination between the two national organizations. The Rochdale Institute, the Bureau of Cooperative Medicine, and one office of the League will remain in New York City.

*December*

Farm Tenancy Committee of the Iowa State Planning Board urges "the proper application and practice of cooperative credit, consumers' and producers' cooperatives, and processing cooperatives" as steps by which Iowa farmers may "achieve a state of deserved prosperity and help create a better situation for the Nation as a whole."

December 1.—Greenhills Consumers' Services, Inc., cooperative organization of residents of Greenhills, Ohio, takes over operation of retail establishments at this Farm Security-sponsored community, suburb of Cincinnati.



## ORGANIZATION

*February*

February 24.—President Roosevelt receives a consumers' delegation, representing consumer organizations, social workers, farm and labor groups, and church and university people, and brought together by the Consumers' National Federation. The delegation urges "a comprehensive inquiry into the flagrant under-consumption of the necessities of life; into the commercial practices and devices which make it impossible for the housewife to get her money's worth; into the business and financial controls which deny to workers and farmers the right to enjoy the abundant standard of living which they are ready and able to produce." This delegation also asks for "the creation of a central service agency for consumers in the Federal Government."



## May

Plans are announced for organization of a "National Consumer Education Association."

May 21.—Conference on the High Cost of Living is held under auspices of Consumers' Federation of Washington, D. C.

## June

Consumers' League of New York issues new program which states: "We set ourselves the task of discovering whether manufacturers are really keeping a fair and proper ratio between the increased price of labor and a fair price to the consumer. . . ."

## July

July 18-20.—National Health Conference in Washington brings together representatives of the medical, nursing, and dental professions, hospital administrators, social workers, and spokesmen for farm, industrial and labor organizations, consumer and cooperative groups. Program for expansion of public health and child and maternal welfare work, wider hospital facilities, medical care for the indigent, more adequate medical care for the people as a whole, insurance against loss of wages through sickness and disability, is presented by the President's Interdepartmental Committee on Health and Welfare Activities.

## September

September 17.—First New York State convention of Congress of Industrial Organizations recommends that each of its affiliated bodies elect "permanent consumer committees for the purpose of education on consumer problems," and that these committees come together to "formulate a program of consumer action for the organized trade union movement."

## October

October 13.—Governor Murphy appoints the State Chairman of the Department of Government and Economic Welfare of the Michigan League of Women Voters as consumer member of the Milk Survey Board for Michigan.

October 27.—National Paint, Varnish and Lacquer Association leads the way in trade association recognition of need for informative labels and urges that "formula labeling of all exterior house paints and building paints, barn and roof paints, floor paints (interior and exterior) and wall paints and primers . . . should be universally adopted by members of this industry."

## November

November 17.—At first public hearings under 1938 Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, spokesmen appear for consumer-minded groups representing over a million people. Under the new law, regulations promulgated after hearings have the force of law. "Consumers all over the country," states a representative of the American Home Economics Association, "are watching with keen interest the regulations which the Food and Drug Administration proposes as a means of carrying out the provisions of the 1938 law."

## December

December 8.—United States Housing Authority announces that last of 800 million dollar appropriation has been committed for the clearance of slums and the construction of low-rent housing by local housing authorities. Homes for 160 thousand families, comprising about half a million people, will be provided when these projects are completed by 155 local communities.

December 18.—California Medical Association votes to set up plan of voluntary health insurance, providing both physicians' and hospital care to subscribers. This is to be the first plan of its kind undertaken by a State medical association.



## LEGISLATION

### March

March 15-16.—Public hearings are held by the House of Representatives Committee on Coinage, Weights and Measures on a bill (H. R. 6964) to

standardize the sizes of cans for fruits, vegetables, and canned milk. No action was taken by Congress on this bill.

March 21.—Wheeler-Lea Act, enlarging powers of Federal Trade Commission to protect consumers, and giving it specific power over false and misleading advertising of foods, drugs, and cosmetics, is signed by the President.

## May

May 20.—New York City Council considers plan, backed by representatives of 480,000 consumers, to require sale of meat by Government grades. A Council Committee watches a demonstration of meat grading, but the Council takes negative action on the proposal.

## June

June 12-19.—New York State Constitutional Convention Committee hears representatives of organized consumers, farmers, and labor present the case for the creation, by constitutional amendment, of a Department of the Consumer. Scope of such a Department, as recommended by a special Governor's Advisory Committee to the convention, might include:

- "(1) Representing the interests of the consumer before regulatory bodies. . .
- "(2) General investigations relating to any matters which affect the cost of living or the distribution of the consumer's purchasing dollar.
- "(3) A broad program of consumer education.
- "(4) Acting as an established point of contact between organized consumer groups and the State government.
- "(5) Seeking to make it possible for the consumer to expend his money intelligently by promoting in every way the furnishing of adequate information regarding the character of commodities on the market."

The Convention did not act favorably on this proposal.

June 13.—A "truth-in-fabrics" bill (S. 3502) passes the Senate. Referred to a House Committee, it is not acted upon before Congress adjourns.

June 16.—Congressional joint resolution sets up the Temporary National

**6** Economic Committee, and a sweeping examination of the Nation's economic machinery begins. Duties of the Committee are to report on: "(1) the causes of concentration and control and their effect upon competition; (2) the effect of the existing price system and the price policies of industry upon the general level of trade, upon employment, upon long-term profits, and upon consumption; and (3) the effect of existing tax, patent and other Government policies upon competition, price levels, unemployment, profits, and consumption.

June 25.—Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act of 1938 is approved by the President. This is the first basic revision of the original Federal statute, passed in 1906. The 1938 Act for the first time gives consumers protection against dangerous and misbranded cosmetics and healing devices; establishes safeguards against dangerous new drugs; requires certain types of informative labeling for foods; makes provision for standards of identity for food products. It provides for public hearings, in connection with regulations under the law, at which consumers as well as other interested parties may be heard.

#### July

July 1.—After 3 years of operation, the Rural Electrification Administration's appropriation is increased to make 140 million dollars available for loans encouraging the extension of electric power to farm families during the 1938-39 year.



#### REGULATION

#### April

April 8.—Consumers' Counsel of the National Bituminous Coal Commission submits to the Commission a proposed standard plan for classifying coals so that consumers, especially domestic consumers, can select their coals on basis of effective heat value.

#### May

May 31.—Consumers' Counsel of the

National Bituminous Coal Commission notifies Commission that Consumers' Counsel believes individual consumers have a right to appear before the Commission represented by their own counsel as interested parties, and are not required to make complaints or seek relief only through Consumers' Counsel.

#### June

June 17.—Trade practice rules for the fur industry, forbidding the misrepresentation of the grade, quality, or kind of fur by advertisements or labels, are promulgated by Federal Trade Commission.

June 30.—Shrinkage properties of woven cotton goods are made the subject of trade practice rules issued by FTC. Rules include National Bureau of Standards' Commercial Standard, giving the method to be used in testing cotton goods for shrinkage.

#### July

July 8.—Department of Justice begins hearings before Chicago Grand Jury to discover whether a milk monopoly exists, and, if so, how it works, and what can be done about it.

July 15.—First seizure is made under the 1938 Food, Drug, and Cosmetic law's provision against dangerous cosmetics. This action takes off the interstate market packages of an eyelash dye responsible for injury to a number of women.

#### September

September 16.—Advertising of a dangerous weight-reducing remedy is temporarily halted by United States District Court, as the Federal Trade Commission for first time proceeds under its new law allowing injunction against false advertising of foods, drugs, and cosmetics. According to the FTC, the advertising was false because it did not tell consumers that use of the product might cause loss or impairment of their eyesight.

**We would save and encourage the slowly growing impulse among consumers to enter the industrial market place equipped with sufficient organization to insist upon fair prices and honest sales.**

*Franklin D. Roosevelt's Message to Congress, January 1934.*

#### October

October 3.—Court imposes the largest fine ever assessed for violation of the Food and Drugs Act, on manufacturer of "Elixir Sulfanilamide," responsible for many deaths. Pleading guilty on 112 counts, the producer is fined \$16,800.

#### November

November 4.—Trade practice rules issued by the Federal Trade Commission for silk industry require the identification of this fiber in all articles containing silk which may be advertised or labeled.

November 25.—AAA Consumers' Counsel is designated to represent consumer interests as a member of the Agricultural Program Board, created by Secretary Wallace to review plans and operations of the Department of Agriculture.

November 29.—Conference of representatives of the livestock industry, Bureau of Agricultural Economics of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and several consumer organizations, considers proposals to correlate Federal meat grades and packer grades in one standard to promote use of Government grades.

#### December

December 14.—At hearings on proposed trade practice rules for wool industry, representative of the Union Label Trades Department of the American Federation of Labor pledges support to informative labeling "for the protection of workers as consumers."

December 20.—Federal Grand Jury indicts American Medical Association, Medical Society of the District of Columbia, and a number of individuals connected with both societies for restraint of trade in violation of the anti-trust laws in connection with organized attempts to block Group Health Association, a medical cooperative.

# Scotching Health Hazards

7

**Food and Drug workers tally up their 1938 record as consumer guardians against risks from dangerous products sold in interstate trade**

**TWENTY-FOUR** printed pages contain the year's report to the Secretary of Agriculture from the Food and Drug Administration. Behind that report lies the activity of laboratory scientists, field inspectors, administrators, and clerks. There are about 750 of them, all told. Among them they must guard 130 million American consumers against poisonous or adulterated foods and drugs, against false or misleading claims on labels of foods and drugs shipped interstate.

Over 68,000 samples of foods and drugs crossing State lines and import shipments were examined during 1938. Almost 2,000 domestic shipments of foods and drugs were seized as adulterated or misbranded and ruled off the market. Products of some 13,000 domestic manufacturers and shippers were looked into by food and drug officials.

Activities covered by the current report are those of the fiscal year ending June 30, 1938, the last complete year of enforcement under the 1906 law. The 1938 Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act goes into full effect on June 25, 1939; parts of it are already in force. Enactment of that law was a major consumer event of the past year; provisions of the law are briefly discussed in a *Consumers' Guide* article, "New

**ABOUT** one and a quarter cents per person is all that the United States spent last year on national protection against adulterated and misbranded foods and drugs. The 1938 Food, Drug, and Cosmetic law enlarges the possibilities of protection by covering cosmetics and healing devices, by safeguarding the sale of new drugs, by providing for standards of identity for food products. Success of the new law will depend in considerable degree on consumer alertness, and consumer representation at hearings on proposed regulations.

Rules for Foods and Drugs," which may be had by writing the Consumers' Counsel Division, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Washington, D. C.

The 1938 report is available to consumers, free as long as the supply lasts, from the Food and Drug Administration, Washington, D. C. After that, 5 cents from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C.

Some violations of the law involve grave risks to the public health; others are economic cheats. The Food and Drug Administration, budgeting its limited funds and personnel, carefully gives first attention to health hazards.

Fruit must be checked to see that poisonous spray residue does not exceed the "tolerances" or amounts which it is probably safe for people to eat with their apples or pears. Two



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**A FEDERAL INSPECTOR** checks the raw shrimp as it comes into this cannery and rejects what is unwholesome. Supervision of operations at the product's source guarantees purity to consumers who look for the label "Production supervised by U. S. Food and Drug Administration." Last year 9 out of every 10 cans of shrimp carried this label.

hundred and fifty shipments of apples had to be seized because they carried too much residue of poison spray. This spray can be washed off. In one Eastern State, however, short-sighted growers risked the public's health (and consumer confidence in their product) by spraying later than recommended by the State entomologists, then refusing because of the slight cost, to wash the fruit. Sixty-nine shipments coming from this one State had to be seized, and taken off the interstate market. Later shipments from this State came safely within the tolerance. In general, however, the necessary washing process seems to be used more generally.

Food and drug news seldom reaches the public. Two episodes in this year's report were front-page news because wholesale death struck the country before the Food and Drug Administration could, under the law, move.

"Elixir sulfanilamide" was hastily put out to capture the anticipated market for a liquid preparation of the valuable new drug, sulfanilamide. But its manufacturer did not stop to test whether the liquid was safe to use. Reports of deaths began to pile up; they were soon traced to the so-called "elixir" as

the whole Food and Drug staff in the areas involved swung into action. Practically every ounce of the manufacturer's shipments which went to consumers was traced and accounted for. For 107 people, action came too late. Their deaths, however, shocked the nation so that Congress, in the new Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, included protection against the sale of untried new drugs.

Earlier in the year, a purported cancer serum had caused 12 deaths from tetanus. Careless laboratory methods in the manufacture of this product were responsible for the poison. Again, speedy action by the Food and Drug Administration, along with other agencies, warned everyone into whose hands the death-dealing consignments might fall, and soon swept them off the market.

Another fire alarm to the Food and Drug Administration is the cry of food poisoning. Seventy-six times during the past year this alarm bell rang out. Each time scientific workers rushed to investigate, track down possible causes, gather samples, make laboratory determinations, announce findings, issue cautions.

In almost half of the cases there

was no evidence to confirm the suspicion of food poisoning. But at least 23 outbreaks were clearly due to contaminated food. Worst case was the sickness of several hundred people in and around Washington, D. C.; their undoing was a batch of cream-filled eclairs from an insanitary plant.

Filth and decomposition are bad even if they do not cause poisoning or death. Some 254,000 cans of cream were examined by Food and Drug inspectors, and almost 7,000 had to be condemned because of filth. Tomato products usually require considerable check-up too. Thirteen consignments of ketchup, 10 of tomato puree, and 8 of tomato paste had to be seized and ordered off the market because they were decomposed or infested with insects and parts of insects.

As in previous years the Food and Drug Administration continued to supervise packing of shrimp. Under the Sea Food Amendment to the Food and Drug law, packers may call upon the Food and Drug Administration for inspectors, whose work is paid for partly out of a Government appropriation and partly out of packers' fees. With a heavy shrimp catch last year, Food and Drug inspectors supervised canning operations for 90 percent of the whole pack of well over 1 million cases. Inspected plants label their shrimp, "Production supervised by U. S. Food and Drug Administration."

For the first time in the 3 years that the Sea Food Amendment has been on the statute books, the Government was forced to institute criminal action against a shrimp canner whose label stated "Production supervised by U. S. Food and Drug Administration," on a non-inspected product. The packer who had thus taken Uncle Sam's name in vain to deceive consumer confidence





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entered a plea of guilty; the court im-  
posed a fine of \$1,000, but suspended  
payment and placed the defendant on  
probation for 12 months.  
Makers or shippers of products  
against which the Food and Drug Ad-  
ministration acts can always have their  
ay in court. One case last year in-  
volved the use of a deceptively artificial  
olor in an orange-flavor base used in  
oda counter "orange" drinks. The  
Government's contention was that the  
product should have been clearly  
labeled for what it was. The court  
admitted that "the beverage which the

**PUBLICITY**, the October 10 issue of  
*Consumers' Guide* noted in a full  
length portrait of North Dakota's  
Food and Drug legislation, is one  
weapon in the Food and Drug enforce-  
ment arsenal which breaks no bones,  
but which nevertheless often com-  
mands wholehearted respect.

North Dakota, it will be remem-  
bered, analyzes many varieties of a par-  
ticular commodity sold in the State,  
when the occasion warrants, and then  
publishes the results of its analyses in  
a Food and Drug bulletin. Rather  
than have their goods stigmatized as  
below standard, most manufacturers  
and distributors are careful to see that  
their products meet legal standards and  
comply with label claims.

Connecticut ingeniously varies this  
technique. A provision in its State  
Food and Drug law authorizes any  
public health officer in the State to sub-  
mit a product suspected of adulteration  
to the State Food and Drug enforce-  
ment agency for analysis. If on analy-  
sis the product is found to be adulter-  
ated, the public health officer who sub-  
mitted the sample is then made respon-  
sible for publishing the findings of the  
State chemist in a local paper at the  
expense of the person from whom the  
product was purchased. The adver-  
tisements may note the adulterants  
found in the product, and may also  
give the name and the address of the  
person who sold the product, together  
with the name of the product. The  
guilty seller must also pay for the cost

retailer thus prepares and sells is in-  
ferior to pure orange juice in its vita-  
min content, and the added color tends  
to conceal the weakness of the orange  
juice content." The container with  
the beverage base was used right on the  
retail counter, with its original label  
in view of the consumer. The court  
held, however, that the case did not  
come under the Federal law because the  
drink itself was not shipped in inter-  
state commerce.

Another case concerned tomato paste  
admittedly adulterated with insect frag-  
ments. Counsel learnedly argued that

the shipment did not come within the  
law, that the law was designed to pro-  
tect the consumer only against filth  
which could be seen, and that the  
amount of insect filth in the dubious  
tomato paste would not harm anyone  
anyway. Said the court: "The con-  
sumer ordinarily requires no Govern-  
ment aid to protect him from the use  
of food products the filthy adulteration  
of which he can see, taste, or smell.  
What he really needs is Government  
protection from the food products the  
filthy contamination of which is con-  
cealed within the product."

## Within State Boundaries

### *More notes on how local laws guard buyers of foods and drugs*

of the chemical analysis. If the prod-  
uct submitted is found to be legal, on  
the other hand, the town must pay for  
the cost of the analysis.

Alabama, like North Dakota, has a  
law which permits its Food and Drug  
enforcement agency to look over the  
foods and drugs sold in the State and  
to report through official publications  
to consumers. The published results  
name names and give facts.

Nine nationally sold mixtures for  
the preparation of desserts—mostly  
gelatins—were examined in 1935-36.  
Every package of dessert preparation  
sold by these national manufacturers  
was slack-filled. The worst offender  
was only 22 percent filled, while the  
most completely filled package was 93  
percent filled. Many of these dessert  
preparations violated the Alabama  
Food and Drug law in some other  
particular.

Most frequent violation was the fail-  
ure to give the correct name of the  
product. Gelatin masqueraded on the  
labels of these products as almost any-  
thing from pie filling to pudding.  
Next most honored in the breach was  
the regulation that the usual label in-  
formation be stated in a manner that  
was not deceptive. In the judgment  
of Alabama food authorities much of  
the information was misrepresentation.

Other products that have been sub-  
jected to the searchlight of Alabama's  
publicity provision are cakes, crackers,  
breakfast cereals, catsup, coffee, corn  
meal, tea, sugar, rice, and butter.

Special needs of Alabama's farmers  
and consumers have resulted, too, in  
placing laws on the statute books that  
extend regulation to many more prod-  
ucts than those covered by most food  
and drug laws. No cosmetics law,  
however, protects Alabama consumers  
against dangerous or deceptive prepara-  
tions made and sold within the State.

Products farmers use are in almost  
every case subject to special legislation.  
Fertilizers, feeds, seeds, gasoline, kero-  
sene, limestone, and paints, all have  
laws designed to prevent adulteration  
and misbranding.

One provision at once permits every  
citizen to become a law enforcement  
agent, and places the State's labora-  
tories at his disposal as a consumer.  
Any person skeptical about the quality  
of the fertilizer he has been sold may  
take samples of the fertilizer to a  
notary public, certify that the sample is  
a true one, and then send it off to the  
State laboratories for testing. Under  
the law, fertilizer purchasers may ob-  
tain a refund of half the purchase price  
if certain types of label guarantees are  
not accurate.



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# Researcher-in-Chief to the American Homemaker **11**

## *The U. S. Bureau of Home Economics completes its first 15 years and gives an accounting of its present explorations for scientific answers to homemaking problems*

**THE BUREAU** of Home Economics passed its fifteenth birthday a few months ago. In the decade and a half of its life, the Bureau's work has developed to cover many things—things ranging from vitamins to textiles, from economic yardsticks to household equipment. In its laboratories new knowledge is constantly being sought to aid the attack on troubles along the domestic front. Better methods of cooking, improving family diets from the health standpoint, scientific approach to the problems of textile wear and selection, research on household equipment . . . these are but a few of the lines of work carried on in the daily program of the Bureau.

Here science doesn't stop at its microscopes and test tubes. The Bureau has a bigger job: to bring the results of its research within reach of consumers so they may use it in giving their living standards a boost. The Bureau enlists the aid of the press and radio, issues publications, and writes letters to bring useful information to the public. It works in conjunction with Government agencies both within and outside the Department of Agriculture. Some of its projects take months or even years to complete; some can be finished in a few weeks. But whatever the job, the Bureau has human conservation as its ultimate goal. Its aim is to check and prevent human erosion through making available to the homemaker the results of research that she may use in dealing with the problems of her daily life.

Roots of the Bureau of Home Economics run almost as far back as the origins of the Department of Agriculture itself. In 1893, the Secretary of

Agriculture recommended that "questions relating to the use of an agricultural product as food for man should be considered." President Cleveland, in his message to Congress, commented: "When we consider that fully one-half of all the money earned by the wage earners of the civilized world is expended by them for food, the importance and utility of such an investigation is apparent." Those suggestions were carried out from 1894 to 1914 by work on diets and nutrition done by the Office of Experiment Stations with special grants from Congress.

In 1915 came the establishment of a "State Relations Service" in the Department of Agriculture. Set up in this new service was an Office of Home Economics "to investigate the relative utility and economy of agricultural products for food, clothing, and other uses in the home." That milestone marked another step towards the establishment of the Bureau of Home Economics as it exists today. Nutrition remained the foremost problem of the Office. The work it did in those years still stands as a landmark in this field of research. In this period also, the Office began to pioneer in collecting economic data for use as a measuring rod in evaluating levels of living.

The Bureau of Home Economics, as it stands today, came into existence on July 1, 1923, "as a part of the general scheme of reorganization of the Department of Agriculture." The Secretary of Agriculture was authorized in the appropriation bill of that year to set up the Bureau "to investigate the relative utility and economy of agricultural products for food, clothing,

and other uses in the home with special suggestion of plans and methods for the more effective utilization of such products for these purposes, and to disseminate useful information on this subject . . . ." With no interruption to current research, the Bureau went into operation.

From those beginnings the Bureau's responsibilities have multiplied many times. Today its work embraces not only food and nutrition, but also textiles and clothing, household equipment, economic studies, and an information service that brings to consumers the country over results of investigations in non-technical language. Though staffed with hardly more than 100 people, lacking a single field office, occupying relatively few offices and laboratories in the South Building of the Department of Agriculture in Washington, the Bureau has carried on services used by large numbers of homemakers.

Its work on diets and nutritional investigations is known internationally. Its share in the Consumer Purchases Study, has captured national and international attention also. Farmers, consumers, manufacturers, retailers, scientists, teachers, economists all are in contact with the Bureau for information and suggestions. Its weekly radio programs reach millions, as do its publications and newspaper releases. Its incoming mail totals upward of 10,000 letters a month, seeking information on nearly every conceivable consumer and producer problem. It is a major focal point for the managers of 30,000,000 homes in helping them



**12** to solve economic and technical problems (directly or indirectly) of family living, particularly in the purchase and use of food, clothing, equipment, and other goods and services.

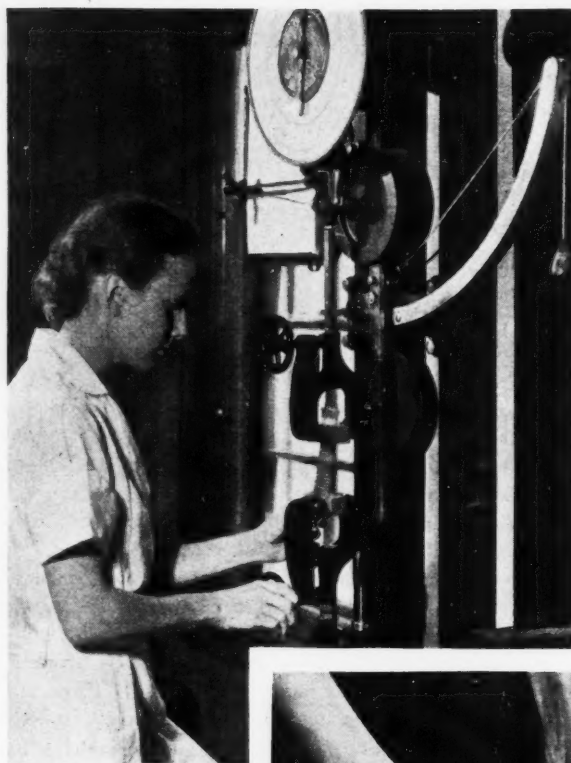
The Department of Agriculture has been directed by Congress to carry on programs which call for conservation and development of natural resources. They call also for conservation and development of human resources. It is here that the work of the BHE closely fits in at the point where there is need to create a balance between consumer and producer and to bolster living standards.

"Any comprehensive conservation program must take into account the safeguarding and development of human beings," reads the report of the Bureau for the last fiscal year.

A review of the report explains how the Bureau is attaining this end.

The biggest job so far undertaken by the economics section of the Bureau is its share in the Consumer Purchases Study begun over 3 years ago. With its staff enlarged by several hundred WPA workers, the Bureau was assigned the task of finding out about the income and expenditures of consumers in 66 farm counties, 140 villages, and 19 small cities. Some results of that survey have been reported in the pages of the *Consumers' Guide*.<sup>\*</sup> We have already told of the results of the surveys of family income. Spending and living patterns are now beginning to emerge as the Bureau, in conjunction with the Bureau of Labor Statistics, winds up the survey.

Significant among these findings, as reported by the BHE, is the inability of low and even moderate income families not on relief to maintain diets that meet minimum nutrition standards. Even families that have enough money to get good diets show a lack of the necessary information to plan diets wisely. The conclusions, says the report, "point to the need both for increased purchasing power on the part of urban groups, and for more widespread education in nutrition and in over-the-counter food buying in order to help them make the most of their



**DEFINING** minimum quality standards for different types of fabrics is another consumer service of the Bureau. Machines, which measure the capacity of a fabric to resist strain give a measure of the wearing quality consumers can expect from it. The machine on the left tests the "breaking strength" of a fabric; at the right is the fabric after the test.

money resources for food."

Out of these studies, also have come diet patterns of families at different income levels in different sections of the country.

Such material is of invaluable use to the Bureau in preparing suggested diets to guide the housewife in the expenditure of her food money at different income levels. The food value of these suggested diets has been cal-

culated in the Bureau so that the housewife who follows one or another of the diet plans can be sure that she is taking care of the nutritive needs of her family. Nutritionists generally agree that it is seldom necessary for the homemaker to calculate food values unless a doctor has ordered a special diet for someone in the family.

One of the jobs of the Bureau is to summarize and keep up to date all



available data on composition of American foods. The Bureau specialists use these data themselves in studying the adequacy of family diets, and they also provide figures for the use of dietitians and other nutrition specialists. At the request of dietitians, the Bureau has this year prepared a single bulletin—not yet ready for distribution—containing data on the proximate

composition (protein, fat, carbohydrate, and calorie value) of over a thousand of our most common foods.

While similar material is not yet available on mineral content of foods, the Bureau is working to this end. Studies summarized last year showed that the greener the leaves of cabbage, lettuce, and spinach, the richer they are in calcium and iron. Green cabbage

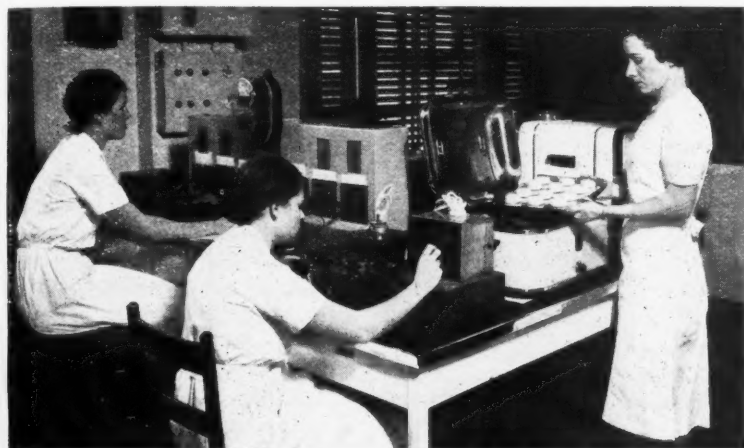
lays claim to being the richest of these 3 vegetables in calcium, but spinach, for the information of the younger generation, "excels in total iron."

Nutrition studies in the past 2 decades have recognized the importance of vitamins in the diet. Much of the work done in the Bureau's laboratories has been to help the housewife learn how to plan her family menus so that they contain the necessary vitamins. To this end the Bureau gives considerable time to tracking down and isolating vitamins in different types of foods. It also studies the vitamin content of foods and summarizes information for other studies.

New horizons of this research border discoveries regarding the physiological importance of vitamins and the amount of each the body needs. Earlier work on vitamins was done largely in what the scientists call "qualitative" terms. Today they are able to speak of the better-known vitamins in terms of "units" and are able to measure them more accurately. Research on vitamins has been done largely with animals, but the scientists are now beginning to measure the needs of humans for a few of the vitamins.

One of the early symptoms of lack of Vitamin A is night-blindness (inability to see well in dim light). This does not mean that every person with night-blindness suffers from a lack of Vitamin A, or that you can ignore food containing this vitamin, so long as your eyesight in dim light seems to be normal. However, there are special instruments for testing the presence or absence of nutritional night-blindness in human beings. Such tests are used in studying human requirements for Vitamin A.

Last year the Bureau undertook an experiment in which 5 healthy volunteers had their 3 meals a day served to them from laboratory kitchens. The meals seemed little different from any other meals to the diners, but they were low in Vitamin A. The volunteers were tested carefully and frequently by a special instrument to find out how well they could see in dim light. Soon they required more light than at the beginning of the experiment, and in a few weeks 10 times as much illumina-



**TESTING** household equipment is the newest field to be entered by the Bureau. These young scientists are testing the heating efficiency of electric ovens. The girl on the left checks the energy consumption; the one in the center controls the temperature of the oven; the one on the right is inserting baking powder biscuits for the test.



**SINCE 1935** the Bureau has been measuring incomes and expenditures of families living in rural areas, villages, and small cities as its part of the Consumer Purchases Study. Here a group of workers are computing the results of the survey.

tion was needed as at first. After taking progressively large doses of either cod-liver oil or carotene, their ability to adapt themselves rapidly to changes in illumination was back to normal. Carotene is a yellow substance manufactured by plants; animals turn this carotene into Vitamin A. You can get your Vitamin A from the following animal products: whole milk, cream, butter, cheese, eggs, liver, and oily fish; or your body can make it from the carotene of green and yellow-colored vegetables. Fish liver oils are even richer sources of this vitamin (and of Vitamin D as well) and are considered an important addition to the diet, at least for children.

Vitamin hunts among cans of tomatoes and tomato juice showed that these canned foods are both good sources of ascorbic acid, Vitamin C (the anti-scurvy vitamin) though there are variations from can to can, even in the same brand. Canned tomatoes varied less in the amount of this vitamin they contained than the canned juice. Research also showed that home-canned tomatoes, under certain processing methods, did not lose Vitamin C, but when stored at ordinary room temperature for 6 months suffered a 30 to 50 percent loss of the vitamin. Even allowing for this loss, home canned tomatoes are a rich source of Vitamin C.

The scientists also knocked a prop from under the suspicion that both commercially canned tomato juice and fresh orange juice lose Vitamin C if left stored overnight. You can keep orange juice in loosely covered jars in the refrigerator at a temperature of 45 degrees F. or below for a day or two, and commercially canned tomato juice in loosely covered containers for 2 or 3 days without enough change in their Vitamin C content to worry about.

Almost as important as food selection is food preparation. Don't overcook your carrots and spinach and don't throw away the water they were cooked in if you want to get the full benefit of Vitamin B (thiamin, sometimes called the "appetite vitamin") found in them. The laboratory cooks found that practically all of this vitamin is retained in the cooked vegetable and cooking water.

Domestic chefs who have trouble making angel food cakes no matter how faithfully they follow the recipes should heed the advice of these scientific chefs. You run the risk of less tender, less elastic cakes if you use eggs with thin watery whites.

Improving methods of preparing foods is one approach of the Bureau's explorers to better diets. The other—more important to the producer than the consumer—is to discover how foods may be improved in quality, flavor, palatability through methods of production.

For example, laboratory experts of the Bureau suspect that palatability of meats isn't all in their cooking. In cooperation with the Bureaus of Animal Industry and Agricultural Economics, the Bureau of Home Economics has been investigating the cooking qualities of meat samples from animals of different breed, sex, age, and feeding. In addition, they are testing cooking qualities of meats cured, ripened, and stored under different methods. Last year 450 cuts from experimental cattle, lambs, and hogs were prepared under laboratory conditions and judged for palatability.

Working with the Bureau of Plant Industry, the BHE scientists are showing the relationship between cooking qualities of potatoes and such conditions of production as variety of the tuber, type of soil they are grown in, depth at which they were planted, manner in which they were stored, and so on. Under this research, too, comes the problem of discovering whether blackening of potatoes—so familiar to domestic cooks—has anything to do with the manner in which they were grown.

In addition to this type of food research, the Bureau is continually educating consumers on new ways of using foods. Wise use of foods, its experts say, is just as important as wise choice. An important part of this work is the development of recipes suitable for diets of families in the lower income groups. The Bureau has been one of the leaders in informing consumers on the value and economy of dried skim milk, for example.

Star among the achievements of the

Bureau is its success in making consumers label-conscious when they buy textiles and clothing. Not only has the phase of the Bureau's research acted as a guidepost for consumers; it has also resulted in setting up specifications for manufacturers to follow when they try to improve quality and wearability of clothing and textiles. Results of research in the Bureau's laboratories lay year on broadcloth, sheets, and towels are being used by the American Society for Testing Materials as tentative specifications for these fabrics.

Minimum quality standards for terry towels, worked out by the Bureau, would—if adopted by the trade—keep off the market "qualities so poor as to be worthless as a towel." Standards, based on the number of yarns per inch in the towel fabric, its weight, and its breaking strength have been evolved for four types of terry toweling and recommendations for informative labeling drawn up. Tests made in setting up the standards showed that towels with double-ply yarns in the foundation fabric are always heavier and stronger than towels with single yarns. They also suffered less from laundering. "It was apparent that they would give greater satisfaction to the user than the single-yarn towel," concludes the report.

Five distinct classes of sheets are now defined by the Bureau as a guide in consumer buying. Working with the Bureau of Agricultural Economics the BHE also investigated the serviceability of sheets made of different types of cotton. Gradual building up of results such as these will ultimately aid the cotton grower to produce fibers best suited to different types of household textiles.

"Broadcloth," says the report, "is another fabric that has been lowered in quality until the word means nothing at the present time." Some fabrics sold as broadcloth were found, under the magnifying glass, to be more like muslin than anything else. Specifications for four types of broadcloth to be used as label guides to quality were suggested, along with minimum requirements for all such fabrics.

Suggested standards for upholstery fabrics drawn up by the Bureau were

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described in our last issue. More minimum quality standards set up in the Bureau's laboratories include 2 for all-wool blankets, 2 for all-cotton, 1 for cotton warp-wool filling, and 1 for blankets containing between 5 and 25 percent wool. In cooperation with the Bureau of Animal Industry the Bureau is going forward on an investigation of the use value of blankets made from wool of different qualities.

Pioneering again in its textile research, the Bureau discovered a new method of sterilizing wool that leaves fibers and fabric undamaged.

Rare is the mother who does not know the worries involved in fitting her youngster correctly with a new suit or dress. It was this problem that caused the Bureau to cooperate in directing what is probably the biggest measuring job ever attempted. With the help of the WPA, the National Youth Administration, 19 colleges and universities, and other agencies, the Bureau is making body measurements of 100,000 children between the ages of 4 and 14. When the results are tabulated from the 36 measurements made of each child, the Bureau will suggest scientific standards for sizing children's garments. A preliminary analysis of the measurements of 8,000 boys and 8,000 girls gives convincing proof that age is not a good basis for sizing. It is probable, says the report, that final recommendations for sizes will be based on 2, 3 or all of these 4 body measurements: weight, girth of hips, oblique trunk girth, and stature.

How to restore that "new" look to cotton fabrics to make them more resistant to soil and wrinkles has led the textile specialists to study various starches and fabric finishes. As a result, corn, wheat, rice, potato, canna, and other starches can now be evaluated in terms of stiffness, pliability, and "stretch."

Newest in the fields opened up by the Bureau's scientists is housing and household equipment. Keeping up with the times in the growing interest in housing, the Bureau directed a Nation-wide survey of housing needs for farm families and suggested basic requirements according to climate and



**DISCOVERING** better methods of food preparation is always one of the big jobs of the Bureau's laboratories. Egg whites, they discovered last year, make better angel food cakes if they are thick and firm, not thin and watery.

region. Studies also are being made on efficient working arrangements for kitchens and laundries. Other investigations include the heights of working surfaces, materials and finishes for interior surfaces, and studies of storage areas for both rural and urban homes.

Household equipment studies covering refrigerators, stoves, and kitchen cabinets not merely test the performance of individual articles but suggest desirable modification and design. Results from studies of fuels used for cooking show that the quantity consumed depends as much on the design of the range, kind and size of utensil, and the foods cooked as it does on the

type of fuel. Tentative conclusions on various types of fuels both for oven and surface cookery indicate that on the basis of heat units alone, electric ranges are almost 3 times as efficient as gasoline and kerosene, twice as efficient as manufactured gas, and about 1 and four-fifths as efficient as bottled gas. Only slight differences were found in the cooking speeds of the different fuels, with manufactured gas having the lead for surface cooking. The comparative economy of these fuels varies with their cost in different communities. Thus far the work has not progressed to the point where comparative costs of the fuels can be measured.





## Keeping Your Consumer Bookshelf Up to Date

*These publications significant to consumers  
were issued by the Federal Government in 1938*

### CONSUMERS' GUIDE

CONSUMER INCOMES IN THE UNITED STATES, by the National Resources Committee. 1938, pp. 144, illus. Address: Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. 30 cents.

NUTS AND WAYS TO USE THEM, by Elizabeth F. Whitemen, Bureau of Home Economics. U. S. Department of Agriculture Miscellaneous Publication No. 302. 1938, pp. 9. Address: Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. 5 cents.

WHOLESALE MARKETS FOR FRUITS AND VEGETABLES IN 40 CITIES, by Wil-

liam C. Crow, Bureau of Agricultural Economics. U. S. Department of Agriculture Circular No. 463. 1938, pp. 142, illus. Address: Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. 15 cents.

WHEN YOU BUY MEAT. (A leaflet) 1938, pp. 7. Address: Consumers' Counsel Division, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Washington, D. C. Free.

THE FEDERAL CREDIT UNION ACT AS AMENDED TO JUNE 1938. Circular No. 22, 1938, pp. 20. Address:

Farm Credit Administration, Washington, D. C. Free.

FEDERAL CREDIT UNIONS, COOPERATIVE THRIFT AND CREDIT. (A leaflet) 1938, pp. 6. Address: Farm Credit Administration, Washington, D. C. Free.

THE FOREST PRODUCTS LABORATORY, by Forest Service. U. S. Department of Agriculture Miscellaneous Publication No. 306. 1938, pp. 33. Address: Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. 15 cents.

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WHEN A WOMAN BUYS A COAT, by Clarice L. Scott, U. S. Bureau of Home Economics. 1938, pp. 24, illus. Address: Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. 10 cents.

CONSUMERS' GUIDE, Fifth Anniversary Edition, September 1938, pp. 48, illus. Address: Consumers' Counsel Division, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Washington, D. C. Free. Presents in popular form material from the publication of the National Resources Committee, titled, "Consumer Incomes in the United States."

REPRINTS FROM THE CONSUMERS' GUIDE: POST OFFICE GUARDIANS OF THE CONSUMER; PHILADELPHIA GOES TO MARKET; ONE DAY WITH A WEIGHTS AND MEASURES OFFICIAL; WRITING RULES FOR TRADE; TOWARD BETTER LABOR STANDARDS. Copies of these reprints may be secured from the Consumers' Counsel Division, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Washington, D. C. Free.

REPORT ON DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF RAYON AND OTHER SYNTHETIC FABRICS, prepared by a Committee from the U. S. Department of Agriculture. 1938, pp. 50, mimeo. Address: Bureau of Chemistry and Soils, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. Free.

ELECTRIFYING YOUR FARM AND HOME. 1938, pp. 15, illus. Address: Rural Electrification Administration, Washington, D. C. Free.

SHOE CONSTRUCTIONS, by Roy C. Bowker, National Bureau of Standards. Circular C-419. 1938, pp. 14, illus. Address: Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. 10 cents.

THE CONSUMER SPEAKS, Consumer Ideas No. 2, issued by the Consumers' Counsel of the National Bituminous Coal Commission. 1938, pp. 61. Address: Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. 10 cents.

REFRIGERATED FOOD LOCKERS—A NEW COOPERATIVE SERVICE, by L. B. Mann, Farm Credit Administration. Circular C-107. 1938, pp. 30, illus. Address: Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. 10 cents.

COOPERATIVE PURCHASING OF FARM SUPPLIES IN MISSISSIPPI, by John H. Lister and Gerald M. Francis, Cooperative Division, Farm Credit Administration. Bulletin 22. 1938, pp. 59, illus. Address: Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. 10 cents.

KNOW YOUR COAL. Prepared by the Consumers' Counsel of the National Bituminous Coal Commission. Consumer Ideas No. 3. 1938, pp. 11, illus. Address: Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. 10 cents.

REPORT ON ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF THE SOUTH, prepared for the President of the United States by the National Emergency Council. 1938, pp. 64. Address: United States Information Service, 1405 G Street NW., Washington, D. C. Free.

CONSUMPTION OF CITRUS FRUITS AND RELATED PRODUCTS IN BALTIMORE AND ST. LOUIS, by George W. Herve, 1938, pp. 69. Address: Consumers' Counsel Division, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Washington, D. C. A limited supply only of free copies available. Results of a careful statistical study of over 2,000 households reveals the buying habits of families of different incomes, sizes, and nationality.

### Consumer Movie

KNOW YOUR COAL. (A 2-reel movie.) Address: Consumers' Counsel, National Bituminous Coal Commission, Box 483, Washington, D. C. Available to schools, clubs, and other interested groups which will pay transportation charges both ways. This movie is a 2-reel sound film available in both 16- and 35-millimeter sizes, showing the various types of analyses which can be made of bitumi-

nous coal and some of the reasons for making them. May be shown without sound.

### Correction

SEVERAL correspondents have written in to point out that the *Guide* was mistaken in its November 7 issue when it indicated that contaminated custard pastries have been responsible for outbreaks of botulism. The *Guide* went on to describe a public health regulation in Boston which would reduce the danger from this hazard. Unfortunately, the reference to botulism was a mistake. Contaminated custard pastries are guilty, but of another crime, that of carrying bacteria known as staphylococci, which may, under some conditions, produce toxins that cause food poisoning. Staphylococcus food poisoning is rarely fatal. As we noted at the time, this type of poisoning can be eliminated if the pastry filling is adequately cooked to begin with and then refrigerated right up until the time it is eaten.

Botulism results most frequently from eating canned or preserved foods that have become spoiled. Many years ago American canners became alarmed about this disease. Researches since then have shown that danger of botulism poisoning may be eliminated if preserved foods, particularly non-acid foods, are heated sufficiently to sterilize them when they are preserved. This calls for the application of steam-pressure processing. It is a known fact that most cases of botulism have come from the eating of doubtful foods. The poisoned persons took a chance on whether the food they ate was tainted, and they lost. The lesson there it seems is to take no chances with food. If it looks or smells spoiled, do not eat it.

*The winter scene, which appears on the cover of this issue, was photographed by the Farm Security Administration to whom our thanks go for permission to use it.*

# 18 YOUR FOOD SUPPLIES AND COSTS

## HIGHLIGHTS

**Poultry supplies for the first part of the new year are expected to be larger than 1937, perhaps setting new high records.**

**Oranges and grapefruit are expected to be plentiful with a prospect of smaller handling margins.**

**Total canned vegetable supplies may be about as big as last year's record.**

**Fresh egg marketings will increase seasonally until late spring.**

**Dairy products are in large supply with heavy milk production and large storage stocks.**

**ALL FOODS** Retail costs of all foods declined four-tenths of one percent from October to November 1938 to establish a new low for the year. Except for the temporary check in September the downward trend has been continued steadily since June. The market basket of food for a typical workingman's family, which averaged \$1.00 during the three-year period 1923-25, cost 77.8 cents this November. The November retail food cost was 18.5 percent above the cost level for comparable purchases in November 1932 and 27.1 percent below the level for November 1929. November retail cost of all foods was the lowest since January 1935 and are the lowest for any November since 1934.

November 1938 retail costs of all foods averaged 7 percent less than a year ago. Decreases over that period are shown in every food group except eggs and fresh fruits and vegetables. Fats and oils led the decrease, being 11 percent below November 1937, while dairy products, dried fruits and vegetables, and meats followed in order. Meats were 9.3 percent below November last year.

**MEATS** Meat costs dropped 1.8 percent from October to November 1938 and reached the lowest November level since 1934. Largest price decrease occurred in pork and smallest in lamb.

Total meat supplies for 1939 are expected to be above a year ago. Pork

supplies are considerably in excess of last year while beef may be about the same, perhaps slightly larger. Sizeable increases are anticipated for better grades of beef. Ample grain stocks and a favorable feed-livestock ratio point to more beef feeding and marketing of heavier cattle. Grass-fed cattle, cows, and calves probably will be marketed in smaller quantities, but the increase in grain-fed animals should offset this. Veal will be in smaller supply. Pork supplies are expected to be considerably greater than last year. Dressed and live poultry supplies are larger than a year ago, approaching record proportions. Meat prices usually decline from October through February.

**EGGS** Egg prices advanced seasonally 1.2 percent from October to November 1938, but this seasonal increase was less than usual. Favorable climatic conditions were a factor in maintaining the increased fresh production of eggs throughout the late fall. This coupled with a period of warm weather were factors which slowed up seasonal price advances.

Storage holdings are comparatively small. During this period of the year storage egg holdings are an important factor in influencing fresh egg prices. The usual effect of small storage holdings has been offset to some extent by the increased flow of fresh production.

November egg prices advanced 0.5

cent per dozen over October and were 0.7 cent per dozen higher than a year ago as an average for the country.

## CEREALS AND BAKERY PRODUCTS

A continuation of the steady downward movement which began in January of this year brought down the November cost of cereals and bakery products 0.5 percent below the October figure. The net decrease for the eleven months is 7.3 percent. The November cost level is the lowest since February 1934. Flour and white bread continued their downward trend with declines from a month ago of 0.9 percent and 0.5 percent, respectively. Corn meal and soda crackers declined about 1.5 percent each.

**DAIRY PRODUCTS** Total milk production for December 1 was decidedly higher than a year ago and about the same as the preceding peak for that date. Milk production probably will continue relatively heavy. An average seasonal rise in milk production is expected during the next few months. The seasonal low point in milk production probably has been reached.

The slight increase of 0.1 percent in the retail cost of dairy products during November was due chiefly to an advance of 0.4 percent in the average price of butter. The rise in butter prices is attributed largely to the seasonal decline in production, and also to some improvement in demand. The November retail price of butter was 23.2 percent below the level of the corresponding period a year ago.

**FRESH VEGETABLES** The late fall helped to maintain local supplies of green and leafy vegetables in terminal markets, but colder weather now brings a shift in source of perishable vegetables to the warmer climates of the South and Pacific Coast. The prospective acreage of major fall and winter truck crops for fresh market

shipment is indicated to be about 10 percent larger than the acreage harvested in the 1938 season and about 29 percent larger than the 10-year average acreage for 1928-37. Snap beans, early cabbage, cucumbers, egg plant, and green peppers may be expected under normal growing conditions to be in heavier supply than last year. Late potato supplies are less than a year ago while Florida early potato acreage is also less than last year.

Retail costs declined for green beans, cabbage, lettuce, and spinach from October to November, also, except for lettuce were less than a year earlier. Increases from the month previous occurred in carrots, celery, onions, potatoes, and sweetpotatoes.

**FRESH FRUIT** Citrus supplies continue in record abundance setting

a new record. Cooperation among factors of distribution in decreasing margins between producers and consumers is promised. Heavy movement of both oranges and grapefruit is expected throughout the remainder of the winter months and until late spring, the normal marketing season. The marketing season has been lengthened by the continuous shipments throughout the summer from California, although Florida and Texas supplies usually end by early summer. The average retail cost of oranges again declined during November being 6.1 percent below the previous month and 23.5 percent below a year ago. Orange prices are lower than for any November on record.

Increased prices for apples during November, reflecting a seasonal rise, took place. Lowest apples prices usu-

ally occur in October and highest prices occur in June. Apple supplies are now in storage and marketings will be from such stocks until the new crop begins to move next summer. November retail costs for apples were 0.9 percent above October and 15.7 percent above a year ago, a change for the year of about a half-cent per pound.

**DRIED FRUITS** Raisin supplies appear to be about 15 percent larger than a year ago. Dried prunes and dried peaches are somewhat less than last year, while apricots are considerably under last year. Dried figs are about the same, perhaps slightly higher. Retail costs of dried peaches and dried prunes advanced slightly for November, from October 1938, but each was less than a year earlier. Raisin prices declined 2.1 percent from October to November this year and were 7.2 percent less than a year ago.

**POULTRY** Retail costs of roasting chickens declined again in November, with prices 3.4 percent less than October and 17.9 percent less than a year ago. Supplies of dressed poultry are estimated larger than last year. Marketings of live poultry during the next several months are also expected to be larger than 1938.

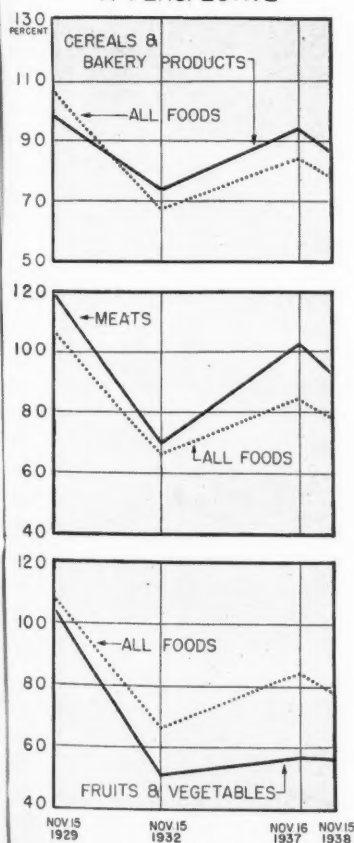
**CANNED VEGETABLES** Total supplies of canned vegetables probably will be about the same as the record supply available in 1937-38 and considerably above average annual consumption. Although canning in 1938 was somewhat less in many items than a year earlier, carryovers brought the supply about up to last year's total. Canned snap beans, lima beans, and peas are more plentiful than a year ago, while tomatoes and tomato juice are less.

Canned pea retail prices are the same for November as a month earlier, but 8.3 percent less than the year before. Canned tomato retail costs declined 0.4 percent for the month from October and 4.5 percent from November 1937, while tomato juice did not change from last month, although it was 8.4 percent less than a year earlier.

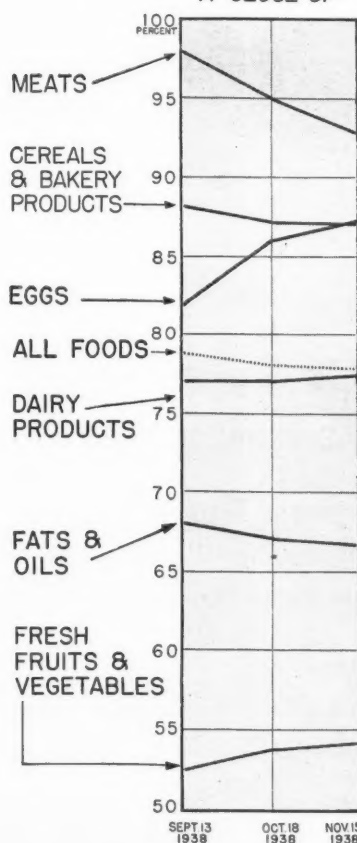
## CHANGES IN RETAIL FOOD COSTS

(1923-1925 = 100)

A PERSPECTIVE



A CLOSE-UP



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